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Supported accommodation services for people  
released from custody: A systematic review to inform  
the development of the Rainbow Lodge Program

**NDARC Technical Report No. 335**



# SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SERVICES FOR PEOPLE RELEASED FROM CUSTODY: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW TO INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RAINBOW LODGE PROGRAM

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Larney

Technical Report Number 335

Completed in collaboration with the Rainbow Lodge  
Program



The Rainbow Lodge Program

ISBN: 0 7334 3680 3

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UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY, 2016

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The authors wish to thank the Manager, Mr Brook Friedman, as well as staff and the Board of Management of the Rainbow Lodge Program. Stuart Kinner is supported by National Health and Medical Research Council Senior Research Fellowship APP1078168. The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of NSW is supported by funding from the Australian Government under the Substance Misuse Prevention and Service Improvements Grant Fund. No specific funding was received for this work.

## **DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

Sarah Larney is a member of the Board of Management of the Rainbow Lodge Program.

## FOREWORD

The Criminal Justice System has long been bogged in the quicksand of the past. Lawyers and Courts have played an important part in ensuring it remained mired in immobility with their adherence to doctrines of precedent, consistency in sentencing outcomes and deterrence. Politicians have likewise done their bit – using fear and ‘law and order’ catch-cries to deliver higher incarceration rates to a system predicated upon punishment, deterrence and retribution. The policies are built on fallacies, religious prejudices favouring the value of hell and fear, and sloppy logic. Research and scientific approaches to sentencing have been spurned as unnecessary. The result has been incarceration numbers far in excess of the prison numbers needed to keep the community safe and secure, and uncalled for physical, mental and emotional damage to thousands upon thousands of persons.

Such research as has been done in preventing crime has more frequently than not been allied to disciplines concerned with other aspects of human life – architecture, regional planning, motor vehicle protection and transport being good examples. Planning from these sources has sought to deny opportunity (e.g. night lighting of parks and high density housing areas, wide pathways, CCTV coverage); or foiling of opportunity (traffic cameras, anti-theft devices).

The introduction of Justice Reinvestment and programs aligned to Justice Reinvestment has brought about some greater analysis of approaches that will reduce, or even more effectively reduce criminal offending, particularly among those who have not experienced incarceration previously. But what has been missing from the research field thus far is any sustained scientific scrutiny of what mechanisms will reduce the currently high level of recidivism rates. Currently, in NSW more than 60% of persons leaving the custodial system return within five years – most within two years. Indigenous recidivism rates are as high as 75%. The release rate of prisoners in NSW is unclear, but perhaps 300 per month based on Australia-wide estimates.

The authors of this Review found only nine publications meeting eligibility criteria in a worldwide search for evaluations of post-release programs similar to that offered by the Rainbow Lodge Program.

Since imprisonment began centuries ago, post custodial handling of released inmates has been virtually non-existent – or at very best haphazard. The NSW Probation and Parole Service (now Community Corrections NSW) since its existence in the middle of the last century, has seen its staff so overloaded with case work that effective monitoring of parolees has been a pipedream rather than a reality.

The Rainbow Lodge Program in one guise or another is historically the longest serving supported accommodation program for released prisoners in Australia – and probably in the English-speaking world. Clearly, then, it was a truly innovative program when it first began in 1964. That tradition has continued with its decision to pioneer a three years research project into the evaluation of therapeutic intervention in the post custodial release life of inmates assessed as having high-risk prospects of recidivism.

Importantly some attention needs to be focused on the specific needs of the newly released prisoner. Men and women who have served sentences ranging from several to many years will re-enter a community far different from the community they left. Houses and streets that then existed may have gone in the name of development. Something as simple as using and maintaining an Opal card will be absolutely foreign to a prisoner who has served five or more years imprisonment. Traffic levels will have increased by 20% or more. Banking is more frequently done through computers, including ATMs, than the old system of over the counter withdrawals and deposits. Twitter, Facebook and other social media communications systems were not around or in their infancy five years ago. Putting one’s past lawless reputation behind him/her – even with family members takes time. One former resident of Rainbow Lodge claims it took 18 months or more after his five years sentence for his family to accept that when he was late coming home it was not because he was out re-offending.

There is a need to find and utilize what assistance works – and what assistance is only cosmetic. That research may tell us what levels at supported accommodation venues are most effective; what time frame at a supported accommodation is adequate; what skills, staff qualifications and staffing levels produce the best results; what level of structure and regulations best equip those moving from a totally structured environment to structure levels that are self-determined; what programs best equip newly released persons graduate to devising social routines to manage accommodation, and acceptable social interaction within the community and in many cases within the family.

As with any innovation project – particularly a research project there must be a beginning. No single research project is likely to provide all of the necessary answers to the many fields of inquiry, including those referred to above. But each will contribute something to the knowledge base necessary for advancement in the post custodial release therapeutic scenario.

The Board of Management of the Rainbow Lodge Program persuaded a highly qualified team of interested academics, led by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, to involve themselves in this project. The Rainbow Lodge Program is grateful to and proud to be involved with all concerned in this pioneering and most impressive Review.

The completion of this Review provided a stepping stone for this team, and perhaps others teams, to progress the research necessary to influence management, treatment and resettlement of long-term vulnerable ex-prisoners into living fulfilling, healthy, worthwhile and socially acceptable lives after enduring the counter-productive and horrifying experience of sustained imprisonment.

Equally importantly this Review may also provide an entrance gate for Rainbow Lodge Program and others to a pathway of scientific allocation of resources for vulnerable persons leaving prison, so that they, at the conclusion of their Program, can recognize warning signs of recidivist behaviour and implement effective strategies for avoiding a return to the sound of iron prison doors clanging behind them.

- John Nicholson, President, Rainbow Lodge Program

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A 2015 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated that there were 51,000 instances of people being released from Australian prisons in 2014 (AIHW, 2015). There is a substantial need for programs that provide support and services to people at this vulnerable time. Securing safe and secure accommodation is one of the most critical challenges that people leaving custody face; however, obtaining housing can be problematic due to interpersonal conflict, lack of family, complex treatment needs and limited finances (Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Graffam & Shinkfield, 2012; Roman & Travis, 2004). Therefore, people recently released from custody may rely on other options, such as supported accommodation programs or homeless shelters (Clark, 2015). These can take many forms, including 'halfway houses', where people live in a house as a group, sometimes following a therapeutic program; or scattered site supported housing programs, where people are provided with their own accommodation (i.e. a house or apartment), while also receiving therapeutic support in the form of home visits and/or participating in other therapeutic activities (e.g. attending a day centre).

There is a growing demand within the field of criminal justice for more rigorous research and evaluation of interventions (Wright, Zhang, Farabee, & Braatz, 2014). Demonstrating the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions is critical in developing and producing evidence-based programs that can produce tangible outcomes for individuals. There is some evidence that interventions for people released from prison that include an accommodation component are effective in reducing re-offending and the severity of future re-offending (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Somers, Rezanoff, Moniruzzaman, Palepu, & Patterson, 2013). A recent narrative review examined the efficacy of a variety of post-release programs, including programs that included a residential component, provided counselling services, vocational training, education or aftercare. Programs that included some kind of a residential component were found to produce the most positive results overall (Wright et al., 2014). Existing reviews have not looked at specific forms of supported accommodation for people released from prison, nor identified elements of supported accommodation services that contribute to positive outcomes.

### Objectives of this study

The Rainbow Lodge Program is a non-profit organisation in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, that provides a responsive, intensive and supportive service to male Corrective Services clients assessed with having high needs, a strong risk of re-offending and homelessness, in order that they effectively re-enter and integrate into the community. This study has been undertaken to:

1. Document the Rainbow Lodge Program; and
2. Identify opportunities for the development of the Rainbow Lodge Program as an evidence-informed service.

To these ends, this report includes:

1. a description of the Rainbow Lodge Program, developed in consultation with staff and management of the Program;
2. The results of a systematic review aimed at assessing the evidence on effectiveness of post-release supported accommodation programs similar to Rainbow Lodge, and identifying elements of such programs that contribute to positive client outcomes; and
3. Implications of the findings of the systematic review for the Rainbow Lodge Program.

### Results of the systematic review

The systematic review identified only nine publications meeting the eligibility criteria for inclusion (evaluation of a post-release supported accommodation program similar to the Rainbow Lodge Program). Studies were frequently methodologically flawed, and few



consistent findings were evident, with regards to either effectiveness of post-release supported accommodation programs in reducing recidivism, or program characteristics associated with positive participant outcomes.

### **Recommendations for the Rainbow Lodge Program**

Given the inconclusive findings of the review, it is difficult to identify recommendations for the day-to-day operations or components of the Rainbow Lodge Program.

What is clear from the review is that there is a need for methodologically rigorous, comprehensive research on this type of post-release program, particularly outside the United States. Ideally, an outcome evaluation would be undertaken to assess the impact of the Rainbow Lodge Program on recidivism and other outcomes. However, there are important challenges to consider in proposing an outcome evaluation: identification and recruitment of an appropriate comparison group, and recruitment of sufficient numbers of participants to detect any effect that may exist.

Given the challenges of undertaking an outcome evaluation (which will require further planning to be overcome), in the short-term, a process evaluation may be a more feasible option for further research on the Rainbow Lodge Program. This could include a retrospective file review, as well as quantitative and qualitative data collection with current residents.

In order to enable future research, it is recommended that the Rainbow Lodge Program introduce a "Consent to research" form at program entry. This will allow client assessments to be used in research, and data linkage into the future.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian prisoner population has been increasing in recent years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Due to the majority of offenders receiving sentences of less than 12 months, the number of adults released from custody every year is also growing (Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone, & Peeters, 2006), although estimates of this number vary widely. A recent study estimated that the number of unique individuals released from custody in 2013 was 38 576, or 25% higher than the number of people incarcerated each day (Avery & Kinner, 2015); a 2015 report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimated that there were 51 309 releases from Australian prisons in 2014; this may include individuals who are incarcerated multiple times in one year (AIHW, 2015). The large numbers of people being released from custody means that there is a substantial need for programs that provide support and services to people at this vulnerable time.

High rates of re-offending among people released from custody indicate that many individuals are not successfully reintegrating into the community following release (Baldry et al., 2006). Therefore, emphasis has been placed on identifying and developing post-release programs that can produce positive outcomes for people released from custody (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Wright et al., 2014). One of the key factors in these post-release programs is the provision of accommodation, as people released from custody are at a higher risk of homelessness than the general population (Avery & Kinner, 2015; Baldry, McDonnell, Maplestone, & Peeters, 2003).

## Post-release Accommodation

Securing safe and secure accommodation is one of the most critical challenges that people leaving custody face (Lutze, Rosky, & Hamilton, 2014; Roman & Travis, 2006). Residential instability and homelessness are linked with higher rates of re-offending (Lutze et al., 2014; Steiner, Makarios, & Travis, 2015). However, obtaining housing can be problematic due to interpersonal conflict, lack of family, complex treatment needs and limited finances (Fontaine & Biess, 2012; Graffam & Shinkfield, 2012; Roman & Travis, 2004). Therefore, people recently released from custody may rely on other options, such as supported accommodation programs or homeless shelters (Clark, 2015). These can take many forms, including 'halfway houses', where people live in a house as a group, sometimes following a therapeutic program; or scattered site supported housing programs, where people are provided with their own accommodation (i.e. a house or apartment), while also receiving therapeutic support in the form of home visits and/or participating in other therapeutic activities (e.g. attending a day centre).

## Effectiveness of Post-release Accommodation

There is a growing demand within the field of criminal justice for more rigorous research and evaluation of interventions (Wright et al., 2014). Demonstrating the effectiveness of criminal justice interventions is critical in developing and producing evidence-based programs that can produce tangible outcomes for individuals. While a number of studies have been conducted on the efficacy of different post-release accommodation programs, the synthesis of research in this area is important due to the heterogeneity of post-release programs.

There is some evidence that interventions for people released from prison that include an accommodation component are effective in reducing re-offending and the severity of future re-offending (Seiter & Kadela, 2003; Somers et al., 2013). A recent narrative review examined the efficacy of a variety of post-release programs, including programs that included a residential component, provided counselling services, vocational training, education or aftercare. Programs that included some kind of a residential component were found to produce the most positive results overall (Wright et al., 2014). Existing reviews have not looked at specific forms of supported accommodation for people released from prison, nor identified elements of supported accommodation services that contribute to positive outcomes.

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1. Document the Rainbow Lodge Program; and
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1. a description of the Rainbow Lodge Program, developed in consultation with staff and management of the Program;
2. The results of a systematic review aimed at assessing the evidence on effectiveness of post-release supported accommodation programs similar to Rainbow Lodge, and identifying elements of such programs that contribute to positive client outcomes; and
3. Implications of the findings of the systematic review for the Rainbow Lodge Program.

## 2. RAINBOW LODGE PROGRAM OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

The Rainbow Lodge Program aims to provide support to residents in order to help them re-enter, rehabilitate and integrate into the community after exiting custody and assist them in developing the skills to live independently. The Program consists of two phases: residential, and outreach. During the residential phase, residents live on-site in a self-contained, eight-bed house. People may reside at the Lodge for a maximum of 12 weeks, during which they are provided with a range of services that aim to support their goals and needs. After leaving the residential program, people are invited to remain in contact through an outreach program that focuses on preventing their reoffending and return to custody; preventing their homelessness maintain their independent accommodation and healthy wellbeing; and maximizing opportunities for them to transition from prisoner to valued community member

The Rainbow Lodge Program serves people with a spectrum of complex needs including: behavioural issues; various levels of AOD misuse; a range of mental health issues; educational and social disadvantage; a history of experiencing the effects of racism; managing their impairment or disability; unresolved childhood and adult trauma; and a history of relapse into reoffending.

The program adheres to a resident-focused, strengths-based therapeutic framework that focuses on the case management of the individual resident, with residents assisted to identify and attain their goals. The program emphasises not working from a top-down approach by managing residents, but working with residents from a bottom-up perspective to help them achieve their goals.

### 2.1 Program philosophy

The Rainbow Lodge Program is informed by the risk/needs/responsivity model (D. A. Andrews & Bonta, 2010) in supporting residents:

- Risk Principle: Target higher risk offenders.
- Needs Principle: Target criminogenic risk/need factors such as: anti-social attitudes; anti-social peers; substance abuse; dysfunctional family; lack of empathy; impulsivity/lack of self-control
- Treatment Principle: Use behavioural treatment approaches which involve rehearsing new skills: structured social learning approaches; cognitive behavioural approaches; family therapy
- Responsivity Principle: Address barriers to treatment such as lack of motivation, anxiety, literacy and numeracy levels, and take into account individual differences such as age, gender, culture etc.
- Design Principle: Implement interventions and activities that are designed based on proven evidence

The Rainbow Lodge Program supports the rights of residents to have choices and opportunities and is based on supporting the self-determination of residents to be respectful, independent and contributing members of the community. Rainbow Lodge residents are supported and guided to take responsibility for managing their lives without re-offending. The Program embraces harm reduction, client centred and strength-based methodologies when supporting residents.

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<sup>1</sup> This overview was written with significant input from Mr Brook Friedman, manager of the Rainbow Lodge Program.

The Rainbow Lodge Program acknowledges the effects of colonisation and intergenerational racism that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have endured, including their disproportionate numbers in the criminal justice system. The program has specific service relationships to promote Indigenous residents' inclusion in culturally respectful ways.

Rainbow Lodge upholds the rights and dignity of residents at all times. Residents are encouraged to contribute in decision-making processes about their participation in Rainbow Lodge wherever possible. This includes participating in: their case management planning; Rainbow Lodge shared living responsibilities; outreach problem solving; worker and client healthy environment and safety; and respectful Rainbow Lodge relationships. All client complaints and grievances are responded to fairly, equitably and promptly.

The Rainbow Lodge Program core values are: Safety, Hope, Endeavour, Dignity (SHED). Strategies utilised include case management; therapeutic support; life skills and healthy living education; counselling and group work; culturally respectful support; advocacy; referral; collaborations and partnerships that facilitate access to support services; professional development; mentoring and peer education.

## **2.2 Program design**

The Rainbow Lodge Program is comprised of residential and intensive support components for up to 12 weeks with an additional 24 months' supportive outreach provided for former residential clients.

To be admitted to Rainbow Lodge, individuals must meet the following criteria:

- Male, aged 25 years or over
- Be high or medium/high risk of reoffending, as assessed by the Level of Service Inventory – Revised.
- At least 4 months on parole supervision
- Have not committed serious offences against children
- Are able to manage with the premise's lack of disability access

Residents may be in receipt of opioid pharmacotherapy while residing at Rainbow Lodge.

Only eight places are available at any one time at the Rainbow Lodge Program and places are in high demand. Therefore, the exit date of a current client and a potential client's release date have to coincide in order for a client to be selected to take part in the program. The Rainbow Lodge Program aims to always allocate three places to residents who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

### **2.2.1 Residential Program Components**

#### *Case Management*

Residents are assessed by a case manager on arrival, and a case management plan is developed. Aspects assessed include need for basic necessities, such as clothing and identification documents; current involvement with other agencies; physical and mental health, including substance use; family connections; legal matters; cultural needs; and client strengths.

Client goals in each of these areas are identified and assessed. The assessment involves determining the specific goal of the client (e.g. to manage alcohol dependence), the support required to meet that goal (e.g. monitoring alcohol intake, counselling), the support available to achieve the goal (e.g. Rainbow Lodge staff, counselling, community connections), and a schedule for this support to be provided. The extent to which client goals have been achieved is assessed upon exiting the program.

### *Daily activities*

Residents at Rainbow Lodge follow a weekly schedule that aims to meet their needs and establish structure in their lives. The schedule involves weekly activities often conducted by external tutors although these do change depending on interest in the activities and the availability of tutors, for example:

- Managing emotions
- Alcohol and other drug relapse prevention
- Healthy lifestyles group
- Art
- Vocational courses (including job skills and computing courses)
- Outings (e.g. museums; visits to the beach; cultural events)

These activities aim to expose men to experiences that they may not have previously experienced and to assist them in developing skills in new areas.

Additionally, residents are expected to participate in a number of tasks involved in the maintenance of the Rainbow Lodge that assist in its upkeep but that also aim to teach residents essential life skills, including budgeting, cooking and cleaning.

### *Housing assistance*

Securing safe, affordable housing for residents is one of the key goals of the Program. This involves ensuring residents have the right forms of identification and often referrals from medical or mental health professionals. It involves locating housing that is available and affordable for the specific client. A considerable portion of staff time is spent assisting residents with housing applications.

### *Counselling services*

Group counselling is provided, with attendance required of all residents. Depending on the counsellors available, the counselling provided to residents is an eclectic mix of different approaches (e.g. mindfulness, cognitive-behavioural therapy, dialectical behaviour therapy).

### *Regular Meetings*

Meetings are held every morning to check-in with current residents, ensure everything is running smoothly and to remind residents of any upcoming appointments. In addition, informal meetings between residents and staff also take place over the course of a client's stay.

### *Program Penalties*

If current residents are not complying with compulsory aspects of the program or are otherwise violating the terms and conditions of their programs, a variety of sanctions are in place. Residents are given warning letters for various infractions and if they do not comply with directions in their warnings, they can be 'stood down' for a period of 7 days where they are relocated to hostels. Residents can choose whether to return to Rainbow Lodge after the stand-down period.

### *Program Exit*

Upon exiting the program, an exit interview is conducted with residents in order to assess where they are exiting to (e.g. public housing or staying with a relative), what achievements they have made at the program, and the goals that they are still currently working on and any follow-up support that may be required.

## **2.2.2 Outreach program components**

The outreach program provides ongoing assistance to residents after their residential stay is complete, with the goal of keeping them engaged with a continual positive, supportive influence. Outreach support workers visit clients in their home or in public spaces to provide support and assistance as needed. Outreach clients may also visit the Rainbow Lodge

premises for support from staff. Clients who do not currently have housing may access the premises for food or a shower.

Clients may remain part of the outreach program for up to 24 months following completion of the residential program. Support provided by outreach workers includes assistance with maintaining a tenancy, linkage to relevant services and agencies as needed, and engagement with the client's new community. Clients may be provided with advice and assistance around goal setting, budgeting and housekeeping. Outreach workers may also assist clients to consider opportunities for training, education and employment. Indigenous outreach clients are offered culturally appropriate outreach support including co-management with Aboriginal-run services and Aboriginal workers.

A new component of the outreach program involves pre-release visits with potential residents still in custody. This strategy was adopted in an effort to decrease 'no shows' – people who had been accepted to the Program but do not present for assessment following release. Where practical, face-to-face meetings with potential residents are undertaken; otherwise, potential residents are contacted by phone or video link to discuss entering the Program.

### **2.2.3 Staffing**

The current staff of Rainbow Lodge is from a variety of professional backgrounds. Some staff members have lived experience of incarceration and/or substance use disorders or mental illness; some positions require this experience.

#### *Manager*

The manager position is a full-time managerial and practitioner role. It involves a wide variety of tasks, from liaising with stakeholders to working directly with residents. The manager is responsible for overseeing residents and their progress, supporting all staff and volunteers in their roles, liaising with government and non-government stakeholders, and managing the Program finances.

#### *Case Worker*

The case manager is a full-time position. It involves supporting the needs of present and future residents of the Lodge. The case manager develops case management plans with each resident to assist in identifying and attaining their goals. It involves supporting residents in overcoming factors that have maintained their criminogenic lifestyles and in linking residents with relevant services, including accommodation, healthcare and education.

#### *Outreach Support Workers*

Two part-time outreach support workers provide support and services to outreach clients. They continue with the case management plans of each client and support them in attaining or maintaining affordable housing. In addition, the outreach support workers conduct pre-release visiting with potential residents still in custody in order to establish relationships with them before they become part of the Rainbow Lodge program.

#### *Residential Care Workers*

Two full-time residential care workers support residents with their needs after hours. These staff play an important role in demonstrating everyday living activities e.g. cooking, housekeeping. They also monitor and support outreach clients who visit Rainbow Lodge on weekends.

#### *Leaving Custody Mental Health Peer Support Worker*

The part-time leaving custody mental health peer support worker provides peer support to both residents and outreach clients with specific mental health needs.

### *Aboriginal Peer Support Worker*

The Aboriginal peer support worker is a part-time volunteer position that is currently filled by an elder from the local Aboriginal community. The role involves supporting current residents and outreach clients of the Program and ensuring that the cultural needs of residents are being met.

### *Tutors*

A number of casual tutors at the Rainbow Lodge Program conduct a range of activities and services for residents.

### *Other Positions*

A number of casual workers and volunteers also work at the Rainbow Lodge Program, assisting the manager and staff in their roles. Student placements are also supported through the program with supervision provided by the Manager.

## **2.3 Intended outcomes**

The short and medium term intended outcomes of the Rainbow Lodge Program are to support residents to:

- Cease offending
- Cease using illicit drugs, to use legal drugs in a way that minimises harm, and use medications as prescribed
- Manage their mental illness, health, impairment or disability
- Manage relapse behaviours towards their case plan goals
- Examine connections with friends, family, community and culture
- Find suitable housing, and meet the obligations of their tenancy agreement
- Meet their personal care needs (eg. washing, cooking, cleaning, shopping)
- Engage or explore opportunities to participate in work, training, education or voluntary activities
- Manage their budget
- Navigate public transport systems
- Access local health and community services
- Engage in recreational activities

The long-term intended outcomes of the Rainbow Lodge Program are to:

- Cease all offending, abusive and self-harming behaviors
- Support residents to acquire life skills necessary to enable fully independent living such as further education and work skills
- Support resident transition to medium term and long term housing
- Support reconnection with (as appropriate) friends, family, community and culture



## 3. SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SERVICES

### 3.1 Aims

This study aimed to review evidence of the effectiveness of post-release supported accommodation in improving criminal justice and health outcomes for people released from custody, including specific component of supported accommodation programs that are associated with positive outcomes.

### 3.2 Methods

#### 3.2.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

As we aimed to inform the development of a specific service that provides accommodation for people leaving custody, post-release supported accommodation was defined as: a temporary, transitional group residence for adults recently released from a correctional setting that is not *exclusively* a treatment facility for substance use or mental disorders. For example, a service may offer counselling for substance use disorders, but the service is not exclusively for people with substance use disorders.

Studies were included in the review if they evaluated post-release supported accommodation program(s) that met the above definition; this included studies that compared outcomes of a supported accommodation program to another intervention or a non-intervention group, and studies that evaluated program characteristics associated with successful outcomes. Papers were required to be published between 2000 and 2015. Due to resource restrictions, only English-language sources could be included. Conference abstracts, book chapters and publications not available online were excluded.

Studies were excluded from the review if they focused on populations other than adult prisoners (e.g. young offenders; forensic patients; people diverted from correctional settings or sentenced to a community correctional facility) or were exclusively focused on people with specific disorders (e.g. mental illnesses or substance use disorders). Additionally, studies were excluded if they focused on the characteristics of *individuals* residing in post-release supported accommodation that contributed to positive outcomes (rather than the characteristics of programs). Studies were also excluded if they did not provide enough information on the model of supported accommodation being evaluated to determine if it met our specified definition.

#### 3.2.2 Literature Search

We searched 10 research databases to identify relevant peer-reviewed literature (see Appendix A for databases searched). Search terms included words and phrases relevant to:

1. People in custody or leaving custody (e.g. offender, ex-offender, prison\*, felon) AND
2. Release from custody (e.g. post-release, re-entry, re-integration), AND
3. Supported housing (e.g. accommodation, housing)

Database searches were supplemented by searches of relevant websites including cataloguing websites and non-government agencies providing housing services (see Appendix A for a list of websites searched). Additionally, the reference lists of several relevant publications (see Appendix A for full references) were hand-searched for additional papers. The searches were conducted in November 2015.

The full references and abstracts of all potentially relevant publications were entered into an EndNote library. Publication titles and abstracts were first independently screened by two authors (BG and SL) and obviously irrelevant records were removed (e.g. papers not on the

review topic; commentaries/editorials without data). The resulting shortlists of potentially relevant publications were combined, and each of these was reviewed in full by the same BG and SL to determine if it should be included in the review. Finally, this list of included studies was provided to EB, EC and SK, who were asked to nominate any additional literature that they were aware of that had not been included.

### **3.2.3 Risk of bias**

To our knowledge, no risk of bias tools have been developed specifically for assessing quality of criminal justice interventions. As such, we used the Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies, which was designed to assess the quality of public health interventions (Thomas, Ciliska, Dobbins, & Micucci, 2004). Risk of bias was assessed by SL, and reviewed by BG. The findings of the risk of bias assessment were used to inform analysis and interpretation of the reviewed studies, including reliability of the evidence.

### **3.2.4 Data extraction and analysis**

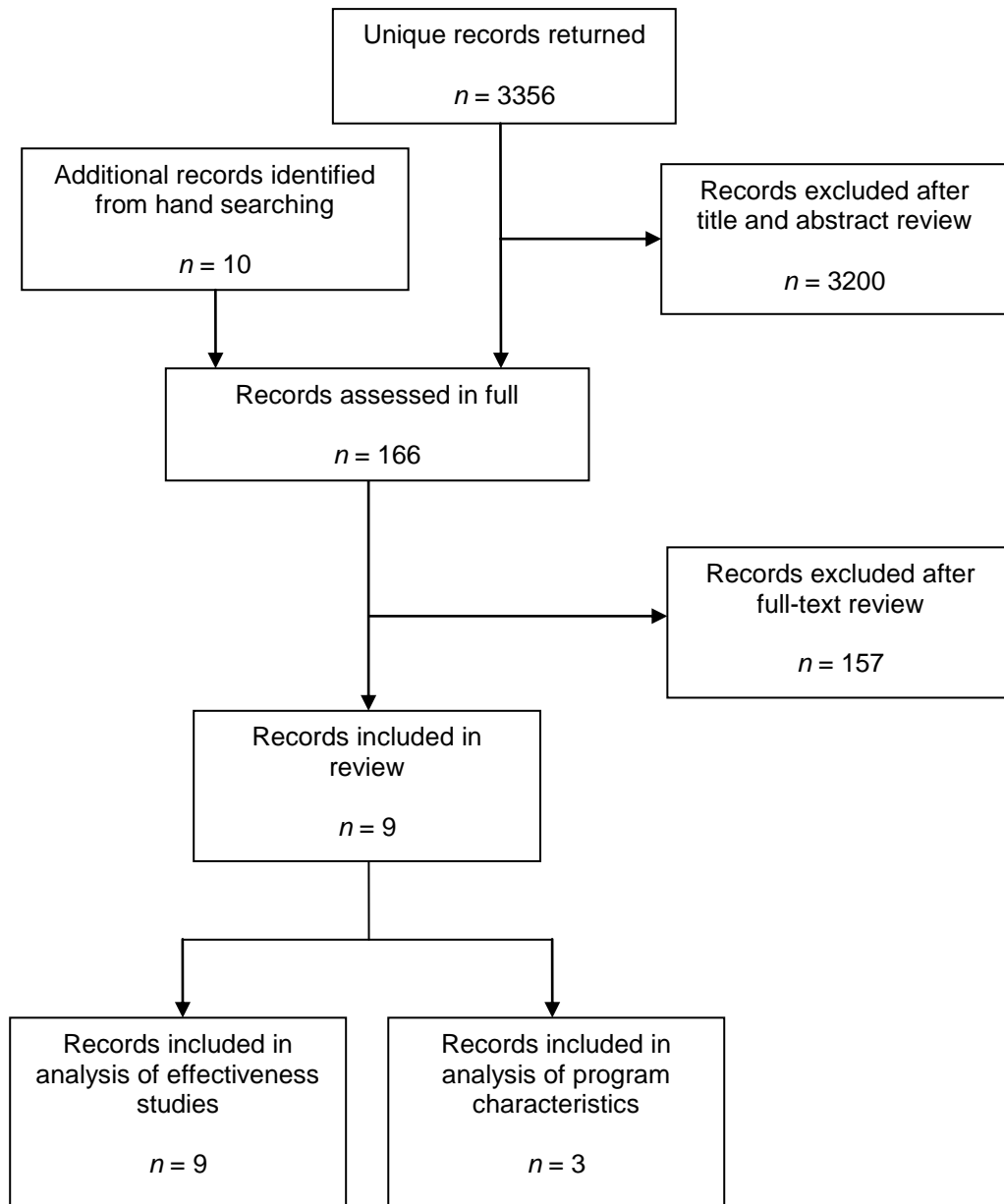
Data from each study were extracted and summarised. The data extracted from each paper included the characteristics of the study design and sample, dependent measures used and outcome data. Due to the wide variety in study designs and outcome measures, meta-analysis was not undertaken. A narrative synthesis is instead presented.

## **3.3 Results**

### **3.3.1 Included studies**

Our initial searches (including literature databases and grey literature) returned 3,356 unique records (Figure 1). Most (n=3,200) of these were excluded following title and abstract screening. An additional 10 publications were identified through hand-searching, giving 166 publications to be assessed in full. Of these, 9 publications were included in the review (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Selection of studies for inclusion<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., Altman, D.G., on behalf of the PRISMA Group (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: The PRISMA statement. *PLoS Medicine*, 6, e1000097.

### 3.3.2 Risk of bias

Of the nine studies, seven were rated as being of moderate methodological quality (Clark, 2015; Hamilton & Campbell, 2014; Latessa, Lovins, & Smith, 2010a; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002a; Lowenkamp, Latessa, & Smith, 2006; Routh & Hamilton, 2015; Zhang, Roberts, & Callanan, 2006), and two as weak (Bell et al., 2013; Willison, Roman, Wolff, Correa, & Knight, 2010). No studies were randomized controlled trials. Six of the nine studies made efforts to address confounding due to pre-existing differences between intervention and comparison groups by using a comparison group matched to the intervention group on important characteristics such as sex, age, and offending characteristics. The remaining three studies employed non-matched comparison groups, although did control for differences between groups through multivariable analyses. All studies assessed multiple recidivism outcomes without adjustment for potentially spurious findings, or consideration of how these outcomes may be correlated. Three studies undertook sub-analyses using only data for participants who completed the intervention, which could potentially bias findings towards a positive result.

### 3.3.3 Evaluation studies of post-release supported accommodation using a matched comparison group

Six studies evaluated the effectiveness of post-release accommodation using a sample of participants that resided in accommodation and a comparison sample that did not (see Table 1). The studies used different methods to create matched comparison groups – including using case-matched comparison samples (Latessa, Lovins, et al., 2010a; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002a; Lowenkamp et al., 2006) and propensity score matching (Hamilton & Campbell, 2014; Routh & Hamilton, 2015). The robustness of statistical analyses varied widely. No studies that reported on health outcomes were identified. Recidivism outcome measures varied, with some including multiple different measures of re-offending (e.g. re-arrest or re-incarceration), while others specified recidivism by specific offence types. Some publications measured recidivism in a specific follow-up period whereas others calculated time-to-event for rearrest or re-incarceration.

Four studies reported rearrest outcomes for study participants. In three of these, there was no difference in rearrest between program participants and non-program participants (Hamilton & Campbell, 2014; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002a; Routh & Hamilton, 2015). In the fourth study to examine arrest outcomes (Willison et al., 2010), three separate arrest measures were presented: prevalence, incidence and time to arrest. There were no differences between program participants and non-program participants in the percentage of rearrests or in the prevalence and incidence of re-arrest. However, the overall number of reported rearrests was lower for program participants than non-program participants. Program participants appeared to have a statistically significantly shorter time to re-arrest than non-program participants.

Three studies reported reconviction outcomes for study participants. Two of these studies found no differences in the time until reconviction for program participants and non-program participants (Hamilton & Campbell, 2014; Routh & Hamilton, 2015). The third study examined two reconviction outcomes: new felony convictions and reconviction (Latessa, Lovins, et al., 2010a). Program participants were found to have lower reconviction for both measures than non-program participants.

Five studies reported re-incarceration outcomes for study participants. In two of these studies, the time until re-incarceration was measured (Hamilton & Campbell, 2014; Routh & Hamilton, 2015). There were no differences in the time until re-incarceration for program participants and non-program participants. However, both studies did find a longer time frame until re-incarceration for a parole revocation and for any return to prison for program participants. Two studies found that when all study participants were considered, program participants had higher re-incarceration rates than non-program participants (Latessa, Lovins, et al., 2010a; Lowenkamp et al., 2006). However, when only successfully completing participants and their matched comparison sample were considered, program participants had lower re-incarceration rates than non-program participants. The remaining study found that program participants had

lower likelihood of re-incarceration for a new offence and re-incarceration for a technical violation than non-program participants (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002a).

A number of the matched comparison studies provided additional results that are not reported here. The studies often provided additional analyses where the results provided were similar to other reported results (Hamilton & Campbell, 2014) or they provided additional recidivism data on specific offence types (by person, property, society or drug crimes; Willison et al., 2010) or by risk level (Latessa, Lovins, et al., 2010a; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002a). Overall, the largest effects of post-release supported accommodation on reducing recidivism are seen in higher-risk offenders (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002a).

#### **3.3.4 Evaluation studies of post-release supported accommodation using an unmatched comparison group**

Two studies compared program participants with a non-matched comparison group (Bell et al., 2013; Clark, 2015; Zhang et al., 2006). The comparison groups in these studies varied. Clark (2015) compared post-release supported accommodation program participants with people leaving custody who resided in private residences, work release centres, homeless shelters or treatment centres. Bell et al. (2013) compared post-release supported accommodation residents with people leaving custody who were released directly to their homes. Zhang et al. (2006) compared program participants with all other parolees that were released in the same jurisdiction and time period that did not participate in a program.

The results of the non-matched comparison studies were mixed. Clark (2015) found that re-arrest and re-incarceration for a release violation had significant positive correlations with residing in post-release supported accommodation. Additionally, residing in post-release supported accommodation significantly predicted re-incarceration for a release violation, although it did not significantly predict being arrested. Bell et al. (2013) found that program participants had higher re-incarceration and overall recidivism, but lower re-arrest, than non-program participants. However, program participants who stayed at a centre for three to six months had lower recidivism than non-program participants. Zhang et al. (2006) found that program participants had lower rates of re-incarceration within a year of release in comparison to non-program participants.

**Table 1.** Results from evaluation studies of post-release supported accommodation using an intervention and matched comparison group

Reference	Location	Tx (n)	Cmp (n)	Facilities (n)	Outcome Measure	Results
<b>Hamilton et. al. (2014)</b>	NJ, US	6599	6599	18	Rearrest (time-to-event)	No between-groups difference found
					Reconviction (time-to-event)	No between-groups difference found
					Reincarceration (time-to-event)	No between-groups difference found
					Parole revoked (time-to-event)	Recidivism lower in residents
					Any return to jail (time-to-event)	Recidivism lower in residents
<b>Latessa et. al. (2010)</b>	OH, US	6090	6090	44	New felony conviction ( <b>all</b> offenders)	Recidivism lower in residents <sup>1</sup>
					Any new conviction ( <b>all</b> offenders)	Recidivism lower in residents <sup>1</sup>
					Reincarceration ( <b>all</b> offenders)	Recidivism <b>higher</b> in residents <sup>1</sup>
					New felony conviction (completers only)	Recidivism lower in completers <sup>1</sup>
					Any new conviction (completers only)	Recidivism lower in completers <sup>1</sup>
					Reincarceration (completers only)	Recidivism lower in completers <sup>1</sup>
<b>Lowenkamp et. al. (2002)</b>	OH, US	3737	3058	37	Rearrest	No between-groups difference found
					Reincarceration (technical violation)	Recidivism lower in residents
					Reincarceration (new offence)	Recidivism lower in residents
					Reincarceration (any)	Recidivism lower in residents
<b>Lowenkamp et. al. (2006)</b>	OH, US	3237	3237	38	Reincarceration ( <b>all</b> offenders)	Recidivism <b>higher</b> in residents
					Reincarceration (completers only)	Recidivism lower in completers
<b>Routh et. al. (2015)</b>	NJ, US	5822	5822	12	Rearrest (time-to-event)	No between-groups difference found
					Reconviction (time-to-event)	No between-groups difference found
					Reincarceration (time-to-event)	No between-groups difference found
					Parole revocation (time-to-event)	Recidivism lower in residents

					Any return to jail (time-to-event)	Recidivism lower in residents
<b>Willison et. al. (2010)</b>	NV, US	156	461	6	Rearrest (percentage; <b>all</b> offenders)	No between-groups difference found
					Rearrest (number; <b>all</b> offenders)	Recidivism lower in residents
					Rearrest (months to, <b>all</b> offenders)	Recidivism <b>higher</b> in residents
					Rearrest (prevalence; <b>all</b> offenders)	No between-groups difference found
					Rearrest (incidence; <b>all</b> offenders)	No between-groups difference found
					Rearrest (percentage; completers only)	Recidivism lower in completers <sup>2</sup>
					Rearrest (number; completers only)	Recidivism lower in completers <sup>2</sup>
					Rearrest (months to, completers only)	Recidivism lower in completers <sup>2</sup>
					Rearrest (prevalence; completers only)	Recidivism lower in completers <sup>2</sup>
					Rearrest (incidence; completers only)	No between-groups difference found <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No statistical analysis of these results was undertaken; difference based on raw data only.

<sup>2</sup> In comparison to non-completers (rather than matched comparison participants as per the other studies).

### 3.3.4 Program factors that contribute to positive client outcomes

Three publications analysed the program factors that contribute to the outcomes of post-release supported accommodation program participants (see Table 2). These typically evaluated program factors using validated criminal justice intervention evaluation tools.

Latessa, Lovins, Smith, and Makarios (2010) examined the program factors of 64 post-release supported accommodation programs (both halfway houses and community-based correctional facilities) using the Evidence Based Correctional Program Checklist (CPC; D. Andrews & Bonta, 1995). The CPC is an evaluation tool for correctional programs that evaluates program leadership and development, staff characteristics, the assessment of program participants, treatment available to program participants and quality assurance. The authors calculated difference scores between program participants and their matched comparisons and then correlated the difference scores with each measure of the CPC.

The program leadership components that contributed to a reduction in recidivism include the program director spending at least five hours a month conducting structured supervision for staff. Additionally, the highest reduction in recidivism was seen in programs that accommodated both genders but the genders did not share a living space. The staff characteristic variables that were associated with a reduction in recidivism included staff skills, the nature and number of clinical meetings, the presence of training and whether the staff's initial training included a treatment component. The assessment characteristics that were associated with a reduction in recidivism included criteria that related to whether specific types of offenders were included or excluded from the program. The treatment characteristics that were associated with a reduction in recidivism included the presence of treatment targets, the presence of cognitive-behavioural group treatment, the provision of gender-specific treatment for women and the inclusion of individualised punishment procedures for anti-social behaviour.

In this study, the program leadership components that did not significantly correlate with recidivism included the age of the program, the presence of stable funding, the qualifications of the program director or whether the program conducted a literature review that informed its development. The only staff characteristic that did not correlate with recidivism was the initial training time of staff, specifically whether the initial training time was above or below 60-90 hours. The assessment criteria that did not correlate with recidivism include the presence of appropriate clients, risk assessment, needs assessment, responsivity assessment and whether the program applies their exclusionary criteria, validates their risk assessment tools or is provided with the risk assessment results of program participants by government agencies. The treatment characteristics that did not correlate with recidivism included domestic violence or dual diagnosis counselling, appropriate punishments being used, the presence of graduated practice and the size of counselling groups. None of the evaluation criteria had any significant correlations with recidivism, including the presence of group observation, staff evaluation, internal audits or external quality assurance.

Lowenkamp et al. (2006) examined 38 post-release accommodation programs using an abbreviated version of the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory in program participants that successfully completed the program (CPAI; Gendreau & Andrews, 1996). The authors calculated a log odds ratio of recidivism as a measure of treatment effect and then correlated it with scores on the CPAI.

The CPAI examines a number of dimensions about post-release supported accommodation programs, including program implementation, the pre-service assessment of clients, program characteristics, staff characteristics and how the program evaluates program participants. The program implementation variable covers program funding, community support for the program, planning, research and the qualifications and level of involvement of the program director. The client pre-service assessment variable includes how well the program assesses the risk and needs of clients and the appropriateness of clients to the program. The program characteristics variable assesses the treatment available to program participants, use of rewards and punishments, aftercare and whether the program accounts for the risk level of



offenders when offering treatment. The staff characteristics variable covers the training, education and experience of staff, their attitude towards the program, how staff are evaluated and supervised and their level of input to the program. The evaluation variable measures the internal evaluations of programs, through quality assurance mechanisms and outcome evaluations. The total score was a sum score of all of the variables as measured by the CPAI.

When the data of both successfully and unsuccessfully completing program participants were included in analyses, the results indicated that reductions in recidivism were significantly correlated with program implementation and the pre-service assessment of clients (for all three recidivism measures). The evaluation variable additionally significantly correlated with a reduction of re-incarceration for a new offence. However, when only successfully completing program participants were analysed, significant correlations were only found for the program implementation variable and two of the recidivism measures (any re-incarceration and re-incarceration for a technical violation). None of the other program outcome measures correlated with any measure of recidivism.

Willison et al. (2010) examined the effect that participating in different program services had on arrest incidence and prevalence in six faith-based post-release supported accommodation programs. The authors included participation in a number of different program components in a model used to predict the recidivism outcomes, while also controlling for demographic characteristics, previous participation in substance use programs and religiosity. The same pattern of results was seen for both arrest incidence and arrest prevalence. Completion of the program was the only variable that significantly predicted a decrease in recidivism, while relationship skills training and spirituality services both predicted an increase in recidivism. A number of other program services did not significantly predict recidivism, including addiction counselling, criminal thinking counselling, computer training or relapse prevention training.

**Table 2.** Results from papers examining the relationship between recidivism and halfway house program outcomes.

Program component	Impact of program components on client outcomes		
	Latessa et al. (2010) Outcome: New convictions	Lowenkamp et al. (2006) Outcome: Re-incarceration	Willison et al. (2010) Outcome: New arrest
Program manager characteristics	<p>Qualified in a helping profession: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Time dedicated to staff supervision: Spending <math>\geq</math> 5 hours per week (compared to <math>&lt;</math>5 hours) on staff supervision (e.g. meetings, providing feedback) significantly associated with fewer new convictions</p>	N/A	N/A
Program operations and evaluation	<p>Time since program initiated: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Single-sex or mixed: Lowest convictions seen in mixed-sex facility (no shared living areas), compared to single-sex facilities and mixed-sex facilities with shared living areas</p> <p>Program operations informed by literature review: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Stability of program funding: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Observation of therapeutic groups: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Staff evaluation: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Internal audits: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>External quality assurance: No impact on new convictions</p>	<p>Fidelity to program: Significantly associated with reduced re-incarceration</p> <p>Program characteristics: No impact on re-incarceration</p> <p>Program evaluation: No impact on re-incarceration</p>	N/A

Program component	Impact of program components on client outcomes		
	Latessa et al. (2010) Outcome: New convictions	Lowenkamp et al. (2006) Outcome: Re-incarceration	Willison et al. (2010) Outcome: New arrest
Staff characteristics, training and supervision	<p>Characteristics: Four or more of assertiveness; ‘firm but fair’; ‘won’t get walked on’ by clients; problem solving skills; paperwork skills; computer skills, significantly associated with fewer new convictions</p> <p>Duration of initial training: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Treatment-oriented training: Greater proportion of initial training focused on treatment significantly associated with fewer new convictions</p> <p>Ongoing training: Training during meetings at least once a month significantly associated with fewer new convictions</p> <p>Clinical supervision: Significantly associated with fewer new convictions</p>	Staff characteristics: No impact on re-incarceration	N/A
Client assessment	<p>Exclusionary criteria: Including high-risk offenders, and excluding arson/violent offenders, significantly associated with fewer new convictions</p> <p>Application of exclusionary criteria/selection of appropriate clients: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Risk/needs/responsivity assessments: No impact on new convictions</p>	Pre-client assessment: Significantly associated with reduced re-incarceration	N/A

Program component	Impact of program components on client outcomes		
	Latessa et al. (2010) Outcome: New convictions	Lowenkamp et al. (2006) Outcome: Re-incarceration	Willison et al. (2010) Outcome: New arrest
Treatment factors	<p>Treatment targets identified: Greater number of treatment targets significantly associated with fewer new convictions</p> <p>Cognitive-behavioural group therapy offered: Significantly associated with fewer new convictions</p> <p>Domestic violence group therapy offered: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Gender-specific therapy offered: Significantly reduced new convictions among women with access to gender-specific therapy</p> <p>Dual diagnosis group therapy offered: No impact on new convictions</p> <p>Size of therapeutic groups: No impact on new convictions</p>	N/A	<p>Program completion: Completing program associated with significantly fewer arrests</p> <p>Drug and alcohol counselling offered: No impact on re-arrest</p> <p>Criminal thinking counselling offered: No impact on re-arrest</p> <p>Relationship skills training offered: No impact on re-arrest</p> <p>Computer skills training: No impact on re-arrest</p> <p>Spirituality services: Significantly associated with increased re-arrest</p> <p>Relapse prevention planning: No impact on re-arrest</p>
Disciplinary procedures	<p>Disciplinary guidelines: Significant reduction in new convictions associated with an increasing number of disciplinary guidelines followed</p> <p>Appropriate punishment: No impact on new convictions</p>	N/A	N/A
Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI)	N/A	CPAI total score: Significantly associated with reduced re-incarceration	N/A

## **3.4 Discussion**

We have reviewed the literature on post-release supported accommodation programs, in order to identify evidence of effectiveness and program factors associated with positive outcomes. We identified only 9 studies that met our inclusion criteria, and these often had substantial methodological flaws. The majority of studies found no differences between program participants and non-program participants on measures of rearrest, reconviction or re-incarceration, although there were some exceptions which identified positive impacts of supported accommodation on re-conviction and re-incarceration. However, there were also studies that reported higher rates of recidivism among program participants. In evaluating these findings, it is important to bear in mind that people participating in a supported accommodation program are likely to be under closer supervision than people released from custody who do not enter such a program, and therefore parole violations and offending may be more likely to be detected.

We identified only three studies that examined the impact of different program components on client outcomes. With such a small number of studies and variation in the program components evaluated, it was not possible to identify any program components that were consistently associated with positive client outcomes. It is likely that different combinations of program components would affect the outcomes of program participants differently. There is a need for further research before drawing conclusions regarding effectiveness of specific program components.

### **3.4.3 Limitations of included studies**

The methodological quality of most included studies was moderate; two studies were considered weak. There were no randomised controlled trials, although some studies employed propensity score matching to address selection bias. Many studies reported multiple recidivism outcomes, increasing the likelihood of statistically significant findings by chance, and sub-analyses that would be biased towards more positive results (e.g. “program completer” analyses). Given the design flaws in the majority of the included research, the conclusions drawn from the studies should be treated with caution.

The included research focused only on re-offending outcomes and did not examine any other outcome measures, despite evidence from other disciplines indicating that stable accommodation produces a range of health and social benefits. Quality of life and other health and wellbeing outcomes may be important mediators of recidivism, and should be examined in future research in this area.

The literature on post-release supported accommodation was often published outside of peer-reviewed journals, indicating that the quality of the research has not been evaluated prior to publication and complicating efforts to identify and retrieve relevant literature. An emphasis should be placed on subjecting research findings in this field to peer review and disseminating work through peer-reviewed journals. Improved methodological quality and exposure to peer review will strengthen the field and provide results that can inform policy and practice in this area.

### **3.4.4 Limitations of the scoping review**

We arrived at our definition of post-release supported accommodation as we were interested in providing recommendations for an existing program that follows a specific model of care. Therefore, the scope of the review is limited. A wide range of services are offered to people that have recently been released to custody, from treatment centers for mental illness to

'sober-living' residences to community based correctional facilities.<sup>3</sup> The effectiveness of these alternative forms of accommodation was not assessed in this review.

Very few studies were identified for inclusion in the review. Despite this, variations in how programs were evaluated (including study design, outcomes assessed and approaches to analysis) complicated efforts to synthesise findings. Additionally, the included studies were all drawn from the United States. There is a need for greater harmonisation of approaches to evaluation of post-release accommodation services, and of studies from outside the specific criminal justice context of the United States.

As noted above, studies were often published outside the peer-reviewed literature. Thus, it is possible that despite our reasonably exhaustive search, some eligible studies may have been missed. Similar reviews have also noted difficulties in identifying literature on post-release programs for offenders released from custody (Wright et al., 2014).

#### **3.4.4 Implications**

We have identified a need for methodologically rigorous evaluations of supported accommodation programs for people leaving custody. Our findings indicate that there is considerable variation in how programs operate and the outcomes used to measure their effectiveness. While the lack of standardisation between programs is unavoidable due to differences between legal jurisdictions, local norms, and so forth, evaluation of these programs could be more harmonised. Future evaluation studies of post-release supported accommodation should use a consistent measure of recidivism (for example, re-incarceration within 12 months) and that they also include other outcome measures, such as the well-being or mental health of program participants. It is further recommended that the ways in which recidivism measures are calculated are standardised, where possible in accordance with the data available.

Although there are challenges to conducting randomised studies in criminal justice research, these are not insurmountable (Nyamathi et al., 2016). In future evaluations, randomised controlled trials or other rigorous evaluation designs (e.g. stepped wedge cluster randomised trials (Hemming, Haines, Chilton, Girling, & Lilford, 2015)) should be adopted in order to strengthen the inferences that can be drawn.

The findings of the review indicate that studies do not consistently provide information on program characteristics and operations. For example, many publications do not report the average length of stay in a program, or the maximum allowable stay. The lack of information available makes it difficult to assess how programs operate and to evaluate their impact on offender outcomes. It is recommended that evaluation studies provide at least the following information when describing accommodation models: maximum beds available, average and maximum length of stay, client inclusion criteria and the main services provided by the residence, including any treatment or training options.

Due to the difficulty in identifying relevant papers to the review, it is further recommended that more evaluation studies are published and disseminated in peer-reviewed publications. This will not only mean that information on accommodation programs is more accessible to a wider audience, it will allow the methodological rigour of studies to be improved and make it easier to synthesise research in this area in the future.

#### **3.4.5 Conclusion**

We systematically reviewed the literature on post-release supported accommodation, finding little consistency in terms of effectiveness of programs, or program factors that are associated with positive outcomes. There is a need for methodologically rigorous research that examines

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that we are referring here only to the variety in *types* of services offered, not access to services or coverage of services

not only recidivism outcomes of such programs, but also health and wellbeing outcomes that may influence recidivism.

## 4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE RAINBOW LODGE PROGRAM

The systematic review described in Chapter 3 was undertaken to assess evidence of effectiveness of supported accommodation programs similar to the Rainbow Lodge Program, and identify program factors associated with positive client outcomes. Although there were studies identifying reduced recidivism among supported accommodation program participants in comparison to matched non-participants, these frequently suffered from methodological limitations. Furthermore, there was very little literature identifying program factors associated with positive client outcomes, and findings were inconsistent. As such, it is difficult to identify recommendations from the review for the day-to-day operations or components of the Rainbow Lodge Program.

What is clear from the review is that there is a need for methodologically rigorous, comprehensive research on this type of post-release program, particularly outside the United States. Ideally, an outcome evaluation would be undertaken to assess the impact of the Rainbow Lodge Program on recidivism and other outcomes. Recidivism outcome data, either new convictions or re-incarceration, could be sourced from the NSW Re-offending Database, managed by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. There are two major challenges to undertaking an outcome evaluation of the Rainbow Lodge Program. The first is the identification of a suitable comparison group. This would ideally comprise men leaving custody who are referred to the Rainbow Lodge Program, and eligible for entry, but are unable to join the program due to lack of beds or other circumstances beyond the control of the individual. This group could then be contacted via Community Corrections to obtain consent to participate in the research.

A second challenge to any outcome evaluation will be obtaining a sufficiently large sample size to permit meaningful analysis of recidivism outcomes. For example, if re-conviction within 2 years is the outcome measure, and we assume that the 2-year re-conviction rate of people released from custody is 74% (Smith & Jones, 2008), to detect a halving of this reconviction rate associated with participation in the Rainbow Lodge Program would require a sample of 89 Rainbow Lodge participants and 89 matched non-Program releasees. It would take approximately three years to recruit this number of Program participants. If the expected reduction in reconviction rate is less than this, the number of participants needed to detect the effect increases dramatically and beyond feasible limits for a program of this size (e.g. if the reconviction rate of Rainbow Lodge Program participants is reduced by 40% compared to the non-program released prisoner population, 163 participants will be required per group to detect this; for a 25% reduction, 512 participants are required per group).

Finally, any outcome evaluation may also wish to consider secondary outcomes that relate to the health and wellbeing of people released from custody, which may also be important mediators of any recidivism reduction that is observed. The exclusive focus on recidivism outcomes may fail to identify other benefits of supported accommodation services, such as reduced psychological distress and improved quality of life. A comprehensive outcome evaluation that includes health and wellbeing outcomes would more fully reflect the Rainbow Lodge Program's approach to working with residents than a recidivism-only outcome evaluation.

Given the challenges of undertaking an outcome evaluation (which will require further planning to be overcome), in the short-term, a process evaluation may be a more feasible option for further research on the Rainbow Lodge Program. A process evaluation assesses program implementation: what is done in the program, and with whom. A process evaluation provides insight into the nature of the client group, what services are provided while they are part of the program, and client satisfaction with the program. This could include a retrospective file review, as well as quantitative and qualitative data collection with current residents.

In order to enable future research, it is recommended that the Rainbow Lodge Program introduce a "Consent to research" form at program entry. This will allow resident assessments to be used in research, and data linkage into the future.



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## APPENDIX A: LITERATURE SEARCH STRATEGY

### 1. Literature database search

The following literature databases were searched:

- Scopus
- Medline
- Embase
- PsycINFO
- Campbell Library
- CINCH
- Criminal Justice Abstract
- Social Service Abstracts
- Australian Federal Police Digest
- Australian Public Affairs Information Service

The following search strings were used:

- 1) prisoner\* OR prison\* jail OR gaol OR felon OR offender OR recidivism OR re-offending OR reoffending OR “community corrections” OR imprison\*
- 2) post-release OR release\* OR re-entry OR re-integrat\* OR re-entry OR reintegration OR “leaving custody”
- 3) “supported accommodation” OR accommodation OR housing OR homeless\* OR hous\* OR living OR resettlement
- 4) accommodation OR housing
- 5) ex-prisoner\* OR ex-convict\* OR ex-offender\* OR parole\* OR probation\*
- 6) Search #1 AND Search #2 AND Search #3
- 7) Search #3 AND Search #5
- 8) Search #1 AND Search #4

### 2. Hand searching

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### 3. Grey literature website search

1. OCLC WorldCat <https://www.oclc.org/worldcat.en.html>
2. National Library of Australia TROVE <http://trove.nla.gov.au/>
3. Australian Institute of Criminology <http://www.aic.gov.au/>
4. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/>
5. Mission Australia <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/>
6. Australian Law Reform Commission <http://www.alrc.gov.au/>
7. South Australia Policy Online <http://www.sapo.org.au/>
8. Victoria Sentencing Advisory Council <https://www.sentencingcouncil.vic.gov.au/>
9. NSW/ACT Aboriginal Legal Services <http://www.alsnswact.org.au/>
10. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research <http://www.bocsar.nsw.gov.au/>
11. NSW Family and Community Services <http://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/>
12. Victoria Ombudsman <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/>
13. NSW Community Restorative Centre <http://www.crcnsw.org.au/>
14. Sisters Inside <http://www.sistersinside.com.au/>
15. Pew Research Centre <http://www.pewresearch.org/>
16. Revolving Doors Agency <http://www.revolving-doors.org.uk/>
17. Howard League for Penal Reform <http://howardleague.org/>
18. Prison Reform Trust <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/>
19. NACRO <https://www.nacro.org.uk/>
20. Urban Institute <http://www.urban.org/>

## **APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF POST-RELEASE SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SERVICES**

Post-release supported accommodation programs vary widely in their size, their underlying philosophies, the services they offer and their approaches to rehabilitating residents (Clark, 2015). Below are some examples of post-release accommodation programs that are described in the literature. This should not be considered an exhaustive list, and these are not representative of all types of post-release supported accommodation.

### *Community Treatment and Correction Centre, Ohio, USA*

Many post-release supported accommodation programs are single-gender residences, only providing accommodation for male or female ex-offenders. As male offenders represent the majority of individuals in custody, the majority of post-release residences provide accommodation only for men. The size of, and services provided in, male-only residences vary but some provide treatment or counselling services that are predominantly aimed at men, such as domestic violence counselling (Bettington, 2008; Latessa, Lovins, & Smith, 2010b; Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002b; Roman & Travis, 2004).

For example, the Community Treatment and Correction Centre is a halfway house located in Canton, Ohio (Latessa, Lovins, et al., 2010b). It has 50 beds available for male residents, who typically reside there for an average of 3 months. The program provides a variety of services in-house, including substance use education and treatment, anger management treatment, cognitive group treatment, family therapy, recreation, vocational and life skills training. Additional services, such as medical or dental services, are provided externally through referrals.

The facility does not evaluate the risk level of program participants but does conduct needs assessments on substance use issues (using the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI); Miller, 1985). Residents at the Community Treatment and Correction Centre receive individualised program plans that are informed by the needs assessment and participate in different program components in accordance with the program plans.

### *Garrett House, New Jersey, USA*

Post-release supported accommodation programs that provide housing for female offenders leaving custody also vary in size and the services provided to residents (Cantora, 2012; Justice; Pederson, 2006; Solomon, Waul, & Van Ness, 2004). They often provide treatment and counselling services that are aimed at women and specialise in assisting women with health-related issues. A number of post-release residences also provide accommodation for the children of female residents (Solomon et al., 2004). In addition, some post-release supported accommodation programs are aimed at program participants acquiring and maintaining full-time employment. These residences typically assist residents in vocational training before they have found employment and provide them with assistance in maintaining their employment.

Cantora (2012) describes Garrett House in Camden, New Jersey, a community corrections work-release facility for women. The halfway house has room for approximately 42 residents, with residents staying there for varying lengths of time (the study participants stayed there anywhere from 3 days to over 6 months). It houses women recently released from prison referred through both the Department of Corrections and the New Jersey State Parole Board. The program at Garrett House provides a number of services in-house, including case management, treatment for substance use, gender-specific services, life skills training and cognitive-behavioural treatment for residents whose risk assessments indicate they require it. If program participants require additional services, such as counselling for mental health, they

are referred to external agencies. Residents are able to be visited by their family during visiting hours and can sometimes visit their families off-site. The facility conducts risk assessment (using the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R); D. Andrews & Bonta, 1995) on all residents upon intake into the program, after 6 months and upon exiting the facility.

The program in Garrett House consists of a number of phases that women move through in order to move ahead in the program and receive certain privileges. The first stage lasts for at least two weeks where residents are not allowed to leave the residence unescorted. During this phase, they complete a case management plan, complete job readiness training and develop a 30-day plan that includes individualised treatment goals. After the first phase, residents are expected to find full-time employment. The second phase consists of residents completing job searches each day. During this phase, residents meet with both their employment counsellor and case manager each week. The third phase begins when residents secure full-time employment and they are expected to maintain 35-hour work weeks. As they phase through each phase, residents are provided with higher visitation and community privileges.

#### *Talbot House, Ohio, USA*

The efficacy of post-release supported accommodation can depend on an individual's risk level of reoffending (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002a). Higher intensity programs are often more effective for high-risk offenders and less intensive programs can be more effective for lower-risk offenders. Therefore, a number of post-release residences conduct risk assessments on offenders and provide different accommodation programs for offenders of varying risk levels.

The Talbert House facilities located in Cincinnati, Ohio are a series of facilities that are designed to accommodate male ex-offenders based on their risk level (Lowenkamp & Latessa, 2002b). Talbert House Cornerstone houses up to 88 low-to-moderate risk offenders, Talbert House Beekman houses up to 48 moderate-to-high risk offenders and Talbert House Spring Grove houses up to 108 low-to-moderate risk offenders with a dual diagnosis. The average stay at Spring Grove is 3.5 months and is 4 months at Beekman, whereas it is only 1 month at Cornerstone. The services provided by all three facilities include substance use treatment, cognitive group treatment and vocational and life skills training.

The facilities all assess the risk level of program participants upon intake into the programs (using the LSI-R) and is tracked throughout their stay. In addition, the facilities also assesses criminal thinking in residents upon intake (using the How I Think Inventory) and also assesses residents using the Diagnostic Assessment Form. The treatments provided at the facilities vary by the risk level of residents, where higher risk residents receive higher levels of treatment (e.g. more time spent with case managers) and lower risk residents receive less intensive levels of treatment. In addition, treatment is generally based on a cognitive-behavioural model and specifically focuses on the criminogenic needs of residents (e.g. criminal attitudes and substance use).

#### *Ridge House, Nevada, USA*

A number of post-release residences in the United States originated from charities or organisations with faith-based philosophies, which permeate the philosophies of current residences. Faith-based post-release supported accommodation programs are often non-denominational and do not require residents to be religious, but instead encourage spiritual growth in residents as part of their rehabilitation. They typically accept both genders of ex-offenders and provide a range of services to residents, some of which are faith-based.

For example, the Ridge House is a series of six faith-based halfway houses in Reno, Nevada that provide accommodation for 38 residents, both male and female (Willison et al., 2010). The services provided to residents in the Ridge House include individual counselling sessions, substance use treatment, vocational training and classes on subjects such as parenting, money management or computer literacy. Additionally, they are encouraged to



access other external services, including anger management or mental health counselling or health care services. Residents are expected to be abstinent from alcohol and drugs and to find and maintain employment after their first month there. The residents have very structured days and are required to participate in household chores that maintain the residence.

Faith and spirituality play an integral role in the Ridge House and is instilled into many of the program's services and components (Willison et al., 2010). However, residents from any religious or spiritual group are welcome in the program and residents are not required to engage with the religious aspects of the program. Spiritual growth is encouraged throughout the program through the relationship that Ridge House has with the faith community in Reno. The majority of the staff at Ridge House consider religion to be important in their own lives and consider encouraging the spiritual development of residents to be extremely important.